



Water



"Water, water, everywhere"

Why do we need water?

- ◆ To carry nutrients and waste in the body
- ◆ To lubricate joints, digestive tract and body tissues
- ◆ To cool the body, especially during periods of physical activity.

What happens when you don't get enough water?

Our bodies can survive without some nutrients for months, but we can only live for 5-10 days without water! We lose water when we sweat, when we breathe and in body waste. An adult loses up to 2-3 quarts of water per day normally. An athlete can lose up to 6 cups of water in just one hour of continuous activity.

Inadequate fluid intake can lead to *constipation* and *dehydration*. Besides decreasing your endurance, dehydration can cause serious effects like heat stroke to occur. Even a small amount of dehydration (1% of body weight or 1.5 pounds on a 150-pound person) can increase your risk of impaired performance and heat injury.

How much water do I need?

Most people need about 6-8 glasses of water each day. Caffeine-containing beverages (coffee, tea, colas, etc.) should not be included in this amount because caffeine acts as a *diuretic* and actually causes you to *lose* water.

More water may be needed during times of fever, illness, or extreme temperatures. Athletes should drink additional amounts before, during and after exercise. A good rule of thumb is to add 1-3 cups of water per hour of physical activity. Thirst is not the best indicator of hydration. Often an athlete can be dehydrated and not feel thirsty.

If you ignore your thirst, you may start to show signs of mild dehydration:

- ◆ dry mouth
- ◆ less urine when you go to the bathroom
- ◆ dizziness or light-headedness

These are sure signs that you need to start hydrating quickly. Don't let it get severe!



What about sports drinks?

Water is the best source of fluids for most athletes. It is readily absorbed and quickly replaces any lost fluids. For athletes exercising continuously for more than 60 minutes, a fluid with some extra nutrition may be beneficial. Diluted fruit juices, fruit drinks and sports drinks can effectively replace lost fluid as well as provide necessary energy to working muscles. Full-strength juices should be avoided during exercise as they may cause cramping or nausea.

Sports drinks do have quite a few calories due to their relatively high sugar content. For recreational exercisers and those exercising less than 1 hour, the additional calories may not be necessary. Water would be a better and more refreshing choice.

What about bottled water?

It seems that everyone these days is drinking special bottled waters, spring waters, mineral water and even flavored water. These products are convenient but they can be expensive. Regular tap water is carefully regulated to be safe to drink. Many bottled waters are tap water that has gone through some filtration process before bottling.

If taste of your tap water is a problem, it could be the taste of the chlorine used to treat the water. Try filling a container with the tap water and keeping it in the refrigerator. That usually eliminates the problem.

Tips for Increasing Your Daily Water Intake



- . Never walk past a drinking fountain without stopping for a drink.
- . Fill a quart container with water daily and keep it in the refrigerator; vow to drink it all!
- . Freeze a water bottle, take it with you to work, and keep it at your desk for an ice-cold supply!
- . Have water with your meals and/or snacks.

Words to Know

Dehydration - condition caused by inadequate fluid intake or excessive fluid loss; can cause dizziness, confusion

Constipation - infrequent or difficult bowel movements, can be caused by inadequate fluid intake.

Diuretic - a drug that promotes fluid loss.